

# Sanitation Survey in Vicksburg

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WITHIN the city limits of Vicksburg, Miss., in the tenement sections, on the main streets, and even in some of the fine residential districts, hundreds of tenants have been using community toilets or chilly privies located in central areas in the yards. The sanitarians of the Warren County Health Department have found and are still finding from 1 to 9 families using one toilet. In many areas where sewer lines have been available for from 1 month to 49 years, pit privies constructed during WPA days have been in use.

After checking on daily complaints of such conditions for several years, the health department sanitarians had reason to believe that their city with a population of 37,000 was in great need of a sanitation survey.

In January 1955 we met with the mayor and board of aldermen and outlined the existing conditions and the remedies we believed necessary for wholesale correction. We discussed the need for a new sanitation ordinance that would cover in specific detail most of the existing insanitary conditions or circumstances. After the presentation, the mayor and board asked us to write a new ordinance and present it to the city attorney for his approval.

The ordinance was approved July 7, 1955, and the health officer and sanitarians conferred on enforcement methods.

## Survey Methods

From the engineering department, we obtained sectional maps showing all city sewer lines and had them enlarged about four times to allow sufficient space for identifying each residence or place of business and indicating the status of the sanitary facilities. The map

sections are numbered 1 through 16, with each number corresponding to the area covered on the city sewer map. For accessibility they are mounted on shade rollers and kept in a map case.

Spot checking the property and plotting it on the maps were sure to take time, but we considered thoroughness essential. As property is surveyed by automobile and jeep as well as on foot, it is earmarked on the map with a stamp divided into three sectors and a rectangular block. The first sector represents either city sewerage connections, septic tank, or pit privy; the second, city water; and the third, properly screened doors and windows. The property number is entered in the block and the house number underneath. A property card, bearing a corresponding number, is prepared for coding as to type of facility and filed by streets (see chart).

We then inspect the property to determine if correction is needed. Until completion of the inspection the insignia on the map is white. If inspection shows that the facilities are connected to the city sewerage and water systems and are properly screened, the three sectors are shaded green. If no sewerage line is available and a properly installed septic tank is in use, the first sector is shaded orange and the other two sectors green. Where no sewage facilities or septic tank can be installed and a pit privy meeting health standards is available, the first sector is shaded red and the other two green.

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*Mr. Hawkins, sanitation supervisor of the Warren County Health Department, Vicksburg, Miss., presented this paper at the annual meeting of the sanitarians of the Mississippi State Board of Health in Jackson, Miss., in December 1956.*

Purple in the rectangular block carrying the property number indicates that the health department has ordered corrections.

With these different colors or shades we are able to picture the sanitary facilities and at the same time the health department's activity and progress.

Following inspection, a form letter is used to advise owners of conditions, corrections needed, and the time granted for compliance. The length of the compliance period is governed by several factors: size of job, number of installations to be made, and the circumstances under which work must be performed. Under ordinary conditions, 30 days is granted for corrective measures. On property held by heirs, the time may run from 30 days to 6 months.

Our first plan of action was to clear each area successively of all violations. We decided after several weeks, however, that corrective action would be speeded if we covered many areas in the city at once. This procedure helped spread the news of work that must be done, and the results were beyond our expectations. In many places we found new facilities installed in anticipation of the inspection.

The number of notices sent out at a given time depends on such circumstances as weather, plumber workload, and number of installations by any individual owner. Many owners have contracted for installations which cannot be completed within the time granted. In such circumstances we note on a copy of the form letters that work is in progress and a new date for completion is set. The notices are checked from day to day and premises are reinspected when necessary to determine compliance. When no action has been taken toward installation, the occupants, owner, or agents are asked to explain the delay. If the explanations are reasonable, more time is granted.

We have found that the people are understanding and fundamentally cooperative. Generally, we have needed only to stimulate civic pride and thereby obtain corrective results. However, if no effort has been made to remedy facilities, we grant only a minimum of additional time for starting the job, usually from 5 to 10 days. When no work is done by the ex-

piration of this new time, court action is taken. We have had to resort to the courts in only 31 cases, representing about 4 percent of the 771 sewer connections installed as of June 20, 1957. None of these court cases have been lost or appealed.

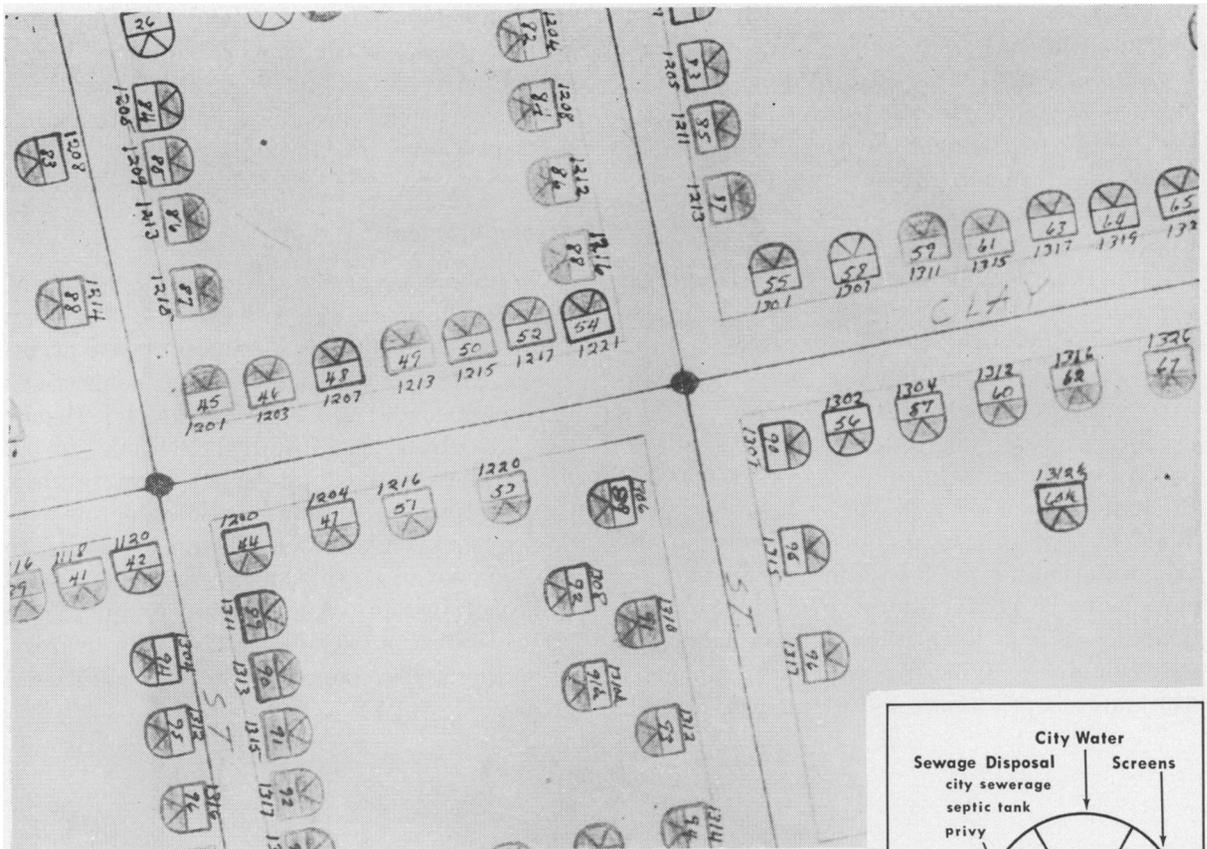
The sanitation survey revealed that no sewer lines were available in many heavily populated areas in the city. We asked the residents on these streets and in these areas to draw up petitions requesting the mayor and board of aldermen to extend lines to their property. The health department has followed such petitions with facts, figures, and recommendations that they be granted. We are justly proud of the response that our city fathers have given this phase of the survey. Sewer connections have been installed on 30 additional streets and areas, comprising 426 homes that may now employ indoor sanitary flush toilets rather than the pit toilets previously used. Unfortunately, in some areas in the city, sewer lines cannot be laid because the topography prevents gravity flow. We expect that this survey will bring about the installation of several lift stations to accommodate several of these areas.

If we had to suggest a first step in slum clearance in any city we should recommend a sanitation survey. In the city of Vicksburg we have encouraged as many as 32 bathroom installations in one neighborhood. Before this survey these 32 families were using 8 outside obsolete frostproof toilets located in a central yard. At the same time, these 32 homes have been given gas connections, kitchen sinks, and structural repairs. In fact, repairs, installations, and cleanups have completely changed the appearance of some neighborhoods.

The effect of the improvements has been to increase the value of property, to improve living conditions, and, above all, to replace a hazardous environment with a relatively clean one.

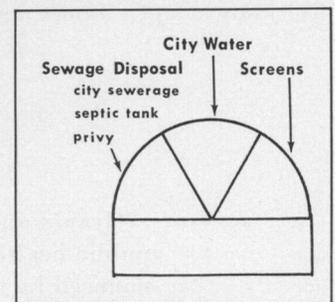
### **Effective Ordinance**

The success of this sanitation survey can be attributed first to the desire of people to move forward; second, to a just and unbiased court; and third, to a good sanitation ordinance. People must have leadership to move forward under any circumstances. We as



Part of sectional map used in Vicksburg sanitation survey.

Inset. Inspection data stamp.



sanitarians have tried to supply that leadership by gaining and holding the confidence of the residents we serve. This confidence has been well demonstrated by the fact that 96 percent have complied with our instructions. Many conferences were held with the noncompliers before court action was brought. In these conferences we pointed out the many problems encountered by other property owners in like circumstances.

In all activities in the survey, we have tried to be fair and impartial. This has been our greatest asset in the courts. Even when we have been compelled to resort to court action, much good has been derived apart from the judge's decision. There is more respect for the health department than ever before. This we consider a long-term gain.

A third asset has been the sanitation ordinance, which we believe is equal to any situation

that may arise in a sanitation survey. Three sections in particular have been helpful. Section 4 requires that each residence or place of business within the city of Vicksburg shall be provided with a sanitary flush toilet and that this toilet must be located in the dwelling or in a room attached to the dwelling. In other words, no more outside community or yard toilets are allowed. The city has many outside facilities, but as major repairs are needed these toilets will be condemned and owners will be notified to make installations inside. This will gradually eliminate all outside systems where the sanitary sewer lines are available.

In areas where sewers are not available, section 5 requires that owners install a septic tank and field line if the lot size will permit an installation that meets the minimum requirements of the Federal Housing Administration. Provisions have been worked out between the

city and the health department whereby the health department supervises all septic tank installations within the city. Permits are not granted or issued to proposed builders until the health department is consulted. Where sewer lines are not present and lots are not suitable or adequate for septic tank construction, section 6 allows a properly constructed pit privy meeting Mississippi State Board of Health standards. In instances in which the outdoor privy is the only practicable facility, we encourage its maintenance in a condition that will not be hazardous to health.

Since the beginning of the survey, Vicksburg has voted bonds in the amount of \$800,000 for the extension of 38 miles of new sewer lines. We feel that this is another direct result of the sanitation survey. This new system of sewers should be ready for use by October 1957. The inspections have already been made in this new area. When the sewer is completed, 653 known septic tanks and 61 pit privies will

be eliminated. Many lots and building sites will be made available for buildings which would never have been suitable without the sewer extension since these lots are too small for septic tank installation.

### **Accomplishments**

To summarize briefly the accomplishments of the Vicksburg sanitation survey, 7,165 homes and establishments have been surveyed or inspected; 771 sewer and 881 water connections have been made; 255 septic tanks and 21 new pit toilets have been installed. Repairs to 102 flush toilets and 35 pit toilets have restored them to approved standards. The door or window screens, or both, that have been added to 605 homes and establishments prevent the entrance of insects. And new sewer lines have been installed on 30 additional streets or areas, providing sewer connections for 426 additional homes.

## **1957-58 Training Grants**

Grants and awards totaling almost \$2 million for the training of public health specialists in the 1957-58 academic year have been announced by the Public Health Service.

Slightly more than half of the funds were awarded to 230 persons, including physicians, engineers, health educators, laboratory workers, dentists, and others who will enter colleges and universities this fall for a year of graduate public health training.

The balance went to 44 colleges and universities offering programs of study in public health nursing and to 11 schools of public health. These 55 schools will select trainees to benefit to the extent of 252 man-years of instruction: approximately 250-300 nurses and 70 other professional health personnel are expected to receive awards from the grantee institutions.

This is the second year that public health training funds have been available from the Federal Government. In 1956-57, with a \$1 million appropriation, the traineeship program provided training for 363 public health workers. More than 600 individuals are likely to be assisted this year.

In selecting trainees, consideration is given to the personnel shortage in the candidate's field, the age of the candidate, his training and experience, and other factors which will increase the supply of young, well-trained workers.